



Building on what is already there

Despite global recognition of the fundamental role played by the family in children's development, it is clear that many families struggle to meet their children's physical and emotional needs, and are subject to social, economic and environmental forces that are seemingly beyond their control. By improving community social support to these families, along with approaches which promote family self-reliance in the care of their children, SOS Children's Villages is aiming to provide a robust model for the health development of children which can be

sustained in the longer term without support. A family is considered to be self-reliant when its children have access to essential services, when its caregivers have the ability to provide quality childcare and when there are sufficient family resources



Achieving Social Change

At SOS Children's Villages family strengthening is part of an integrated approach to promoting the healthy development of all children who have lost parental care or who are at risk of this happening. Elements of this approach include working in partnership to:

- Assist communities to provide access to **direct essential services** including education, life skills and other assets needed to become independent adults;
- Support, through **capacity building** of caregivers, families, communities and other with responsibility for children to develop the knowledge, attitudes, skills, resources, systems and structures to protect and care for children;

Restoring Community Pride

One of the most successful features of the SOS Children's Villages family strengthening programme in Ethiopia has been the empowerment of existing community based organizations to respond to the needs of children. Many families struggle with health issues, extreme poverty and lack of basic education access that often result in the neglect of the children. Nine years ago, the SOS Children's Village family strengthening program began a partnership with "YegnawLgna Tenege Tesfa Community Development Association in Hawassa. Few well respected and dedicated members of the community took on a leadership role to establish the association with the aim of empowering destitute families both economically and socially to enable them to care and protect

their children. At the initial stage the family strengthening programme supported the CBO to build their institutional, financial and human resource capacity. Today, YegnawLgna Tenege Tesfa Community Development Association is able to mobilize resources from the community and is supporting more than 200 needy children to go to school, eat nutritional food and prevent any form of health problems. Though the SOS family strengthening program has phased out, the spirit of safeguarding the interests of children still continues. By working with the community, the family strengthening programme has helped to restore a sense of pride and worth, making it possible for community members to organize themselves and help each other, proving that with the right support communities can be mobilized to help families and children

Employment Opportunity to sustain livelihood

Asrat Mena is a woman known by the villagers for her commitment and endurance against life's challenges to maintain a living for her four children whom she gave birth to in four consecutive years. She works as a daily laborer and does whatever it takes to earn her money to buy the daily bread for the family.

However, the long distance she walks to work and the blazing sun in her work area coupled with poor nourishment caused her to stay in bed for long. More frustrating to her however, was not her own suffering but seeing her children starve. She was forced. However, her neighbors who were almost in the same situation couldn't stand to see that happen to this strong woman. Then they started to beg for financial contribution from the villagers.

It was at this moment that the Family Strengthening Program of the SOS Children's Villages Hawassa stretched its helping hand to solve her problems. She was immediately taken

to a referral hospital - where she got all the treatments and got cured eventually. Her children have also been taken care of by the program receiving all the essential services.

Following that, Asrat was sent to a nearby training institute where she got short term training on catering as per her own interest and later got a short apprenticeship in the renowned resort. Satisfied by her skill and motivation to work, the resort gave her a permanent job.

Speaking of this, Asrat says: "... I had always been working hard at least to secure food for my family before I got sick. The suffering and disappointment had been unbearable when I stayed in bed for long while my children had nothing to eat let alone getting myself medical treatment. However the FSP has generated hope in the midst of my family's despair. I thank you very much and may God bless you all....."

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